

- Meet regularly with the local ombudsman for technical support and to identify valuable resources.
- Develop a system (e.g., phone tree, e-mail) to reach council members for support and problem resolution outside of the regularly scheduled meeting times.
- Provide training on how facilities can change to provide quality care and empower families to be strong advocates for that care.

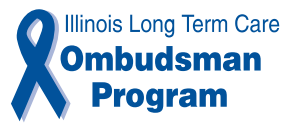
Everyone Wins

Families Benefit Through:

- Orientation and support for the families of new residents plus information on the long term care system, e.g., residents' rights, Medicare reimbursement, etc.
- Participation in care decisions and facility changes.
- Opportunities to express concerns and solve problems.
- Support and protection for residents who do not have concerned families or friends.

Facility Staff Benefit Through:

- Two-way communication between the facility and families, including new ideas, problem-solving and closer knowledge of residents' past experiences, likes and dislikes, etc.



supports the Pioneer Practices and quality of life for residents.

The name and number of your local Long Term Care Ombudsman is available at www.state.il.us/aging/1directory/ombudsmen.pdf.

Senior HelpLine:
1-800-252-8966
(Voice and TTY)

or call:

Long Term Care Ombudsman services available under the Older Americans Act are provided at no charge; however contributions are gratefully accepted and will help to make services available to more seniors.

Illinois Department on Aging
421 East Capitol Avenue, #100
Senior HelpLine: 1-800-252-8966 (Voice and TTY)
www.state.il.us/aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in compliance with appropriate State and Federal Statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 (Voice and TTY).

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State of Illinois
Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Illinois Department on Aging
Charles D. Johnson, Director



Family Councils in Long-Term Care Facilities

Illinois Department
 **on Aging**

What is a Family Council?

A family council is an **independent** group of families of residents who strive to protect and improve the quality of life for residents and provide a voice in decisions that affect their loved ones.

A family council can be the catalyst to ensure that residents receive care that meets their individual needs, preferences and schedules. A family council can be likened to a Family Support Group.

Rights

Families are guaranteed the right to form and hold regular meetings of a family council

in the 1987 Nursing Home Reform Law.

Federally certified facilities **must promote and support family councils** and non-certified facilities are encouraged to support family councils by:

- Providing private space within the facility for a family council to meet. They may elect to meet elsewhere.
- Designating a staff liaison to provide assistance when needed.
- Listening and responding to the grievances and recommendations of residents and families concerning resident care and life in the facility.

How Do You Set Up a Family Council?

First Steps

- Ask family members of facility residents to join you in starting a family council.
- Approach the facility administrator about starting a family council. The support of the administrator and ombudsman will help ensure a family council's success. FCs can be successful without administrator support.
- Contact your local ombudsman for technical support, information and resources.
- Ombudsmen investigate and resolve complaints closest to the resident's satisfaction.
- Set a time for the first meeting.
- Publicize the meeting by posting fliers, handing out invitations, face-to-face contact with visiting families, announcements in the facility newsletter and local newspapers, etc. Ask the facility to send a letter to all family members along with the billing.

Initial Meeting

- Explain the importance of group independence.
- Explain the benefits of a family council.
- Establish ground rules for sharing concerns. It will be important to

allow time for individual concerns, but the council must go to the next step and work with the administrator to improve identified problems.

- Appoint a temporary chair, vice chair and secretary until the council is organized.
- Make arrangements for the next meeting.

Next Steps

- Council meetings should be scheduled regularly enough to hold families' interests.
- Develop and follow an agenda at each meeting.
- Continue recruitment efforts – posters, face-to-face contact, council information included in admissions packet, etc.
- Identify one or two facility-wide concerns and develop strategies and action plans to improve conditions.
- As a group, take concerns to staff, establishing a strong, cooperative link between facility staff and family members.
- Plan special events and activities to supplement the facility activity program and to avoid focusing solely on individual concerns.
- Have educational/informational sessions about facility and long-term care issues.
- Establish a system to address individual concerns, e.g., a committee or occasional set times during meetings to discuss individual concerns.

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